

I Come to the Graveyard Sometimes by Tonight_At_Noon

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Summary:

They keep telling me you're gone.

I Come to the Graveyard Sometimes

Author's Note:

Set a short while after the events of the first season.

I Come to the Graveyard Sometimes

I come to the graveyard sometimes. It is the only place I see her. They tell me I should stay away. It's dangerous here, they tell me. Bad things happen here. But I never listen, because sometimes I want to see her, so I come to the graveyard sometimes.

And today, I need to see her. Not want, but need. Steve was crying at school. I saw him, in the bathroom, through the crack in the stall door, with his hands covering his eyes. His body shook with sobs. Tears ran down his wrists, making the sleeves of his blue sweater turn black. I had to come, to tell her Steve was crying.

I haven't found her yet. It takes a little while for her to hear my call, but she always finds her way to me in the end. I stand by an unmarked grave, the ground still freshly dug, and shout her name into the coming darkness. I wait one minute then try again, smiling when I see her coming through the woods towards me. I smile so hard my chapped, frozen cheeks feel like they will split. My cracked lips do, pouring blood down my chin. I taste it on my tongue. It is hot and metallic.

I wipe my mouth as she approaches me.

"I knew you would come," I say to her. "You always do."

Nancy, her body small and fragile, smiles weakly. "I always come to you."

I walk her to a bench by the gravestones and take her icy hands in mine. She feels different than she used to—colder and more frail. I look into her blue eyes and almost convince myself I can see the trees behind them. Shaking my head, because what nonsense, I open my

mouth to tell her of my day.

"I found Steve crying in the bathroom," I say. "He was sobbing in a stall."

Nancy listens. She always listens.

"I can't figure out why he was crying," I wonder aloud.

My breath washes out of my mouth in misty clouds. Winter has steadily made its home in Hawkins, though when I pass by the Wheeler's home I never see any Christmas lights flashing. I can't figure that out, either. I know Nancy loves Christmas.

"Won't your parents be wanting you home soon?" I ask as we sit. A blackness has begun falling over the graveyard. I need to go. "I can give you a ride," I offer, looking back at my car.

Turning my head, I watch Nancy's rock sideways—*No*.

"Come on, they'll be missing you," I encourage. I squeeze her hands. It almost feels like I'm squeezing nothing. Nancy has become so delicate since her encounter with the monster. I worry about her sometimes. "Come on, Nance."

We remain on the bench, surrounded by a buzzing silence, for minutes more.

"You know," I say, a laugh bubbling on the ends of my words, "they keep telling me you're gone."

Nancy blinks.

"Yeah, can you believe it?" I scoff. "Mom dressed me up in a black suit and forced me to come here. Your parents were here, too. So was Mike. We all crowded around an open grave and they put a coffin six feet under. It's that one over there," I say, pointing to where she met me this evening. "They all cried."

"Jonathan," Nancy says, my name sounding so sad as it runs from her transparent lips. "Let go."

"Oh, sorry," I say, loosening my grip. "Am I squeezing too hard?"

"Jonathan." Again, my name sounds like a droplet of pure sorrow. "Let go."

Confusion swirls around my head. "Why?" I ask harshly. "I like holding onto you."

I can feel a wetness beginning to dribble down my face. I grip Nancy's hands harder and harder until I can feel my fingers break through her skin.

"No," I say, violently shaking my head. "No, I won't let you go."

"You must," Nancy insists, soft. "Jonathan, you must."

"No. You're coming with me," I say. I stand abruptly.

But my hands fall through Nancy Wheeler. I straighten, looking around for her. My frantic eyes search the darkness, a cold wind whipping against my flesh. I spot her by the woods and run.

"No," I scream, stopping short of reaching her. She is watching me, head cocked to the side. "You can't go. I won't let you."

She doesn't say a word.

"Nancy." I am trembling. My eyes have opened and I cannot stop the flood of water from cascading down. "I can't let go of you. Not yet."

"Please, Jonathan," she begs. It's funny—she glows beneath the moon. "I can't leave until you let me."

"I won't let you," I stress, my throat tightening. I can't breathe. "I won't."

Nancy dangerously steps closer, her feet not making a sound as she walks over fallen leaves and broken twigs. She reaches out her hand and I feel a wash of frozen air bathe my cheek. I am gasping now. Struggling through an intense pain in my chest.

"Don't leave me," I implore desperately. My lips quiver as I speak. I

can barely understand myself. "I need you here."

"You don't. Jonathan, you don't need me."

I do. She doesn't understand it, but I do.

"Let go," she says again. She sounds hollow.

"And what happens if I do?" I ask. "Huh? What then?"

"Jonathan, let go."

"Stop saying that!" I shout, the words scratching my throat like knives as they leave my lungs. "Please, stop saying that! Don't leave me, Nancy. Please, don't leave me."

But as I beg these things of her, I can feel the coldness against my cheek dissipate until all that touches me is the wind. I stand there, at the mouth of the woods, and cannot stop myself from bursting open. I spill over the dead leaves and land on the ground in a tangle of tears and saliva.

"Nancy!" I cry, over and over, the word becoming more torn and incomprehensible as the night moves.

My mother finds me later, curled on the ground, mumbling Nancy's name into the dirt. She has brought Hopper with her, and together they carry me to his truck. They take me home and wrap me in blankets.

I dream of her that night. Of her face, her voice, her eyes. She is laughing and telling me stories. And in the morning, I wake to a pang of loss. It weighs me down and stops me from leaving my bed.

Slowly, I return to life, though I never smile like I used to. Will tries to cheer me up. It never works.

Even still, I come to the graveyard sometimes. I look and I hope, but I don't see her anymore.